

# Consumerism in Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century Women's Lifestyle in Sophie Kinsella's *Mini Shopaholic*

(Konsumerisme dalam Gaya Hidup Wanita di awal abad 21 yang terdapat pada novel *Mini Shopaholic* karya Sophie Kinsella)

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## Abstrak

Konsumerisme menjadi salah satu budaya tren pada era paska modern. Munculnya budaya konsumerisme yang berkaitan erat dengan gaya hidup wanita moderen ini dipengaruhi oleh faktor ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi yang semakin canggih pada zaman sekarang. Munculnya budaya konsumerisme mempengaruhi wanita untuk tidak lagi memperhatikan nilai guna suatu barang. Nilai keindahan dan kebanggaan atas kepemilikan sebuah benda dipresentasikan dalam bentuk merek-merek dagang terkenal telah mengaburkan penilaian wanita dalam mengkonsumsi suatu produk. Fenomena yang sering kita jumpai dalam beberapa tahun terakhir ini juga dimunculkan dalam salah satu novel karya Sophie Kinsella yang berjudul *Mini Shopaholic*. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana konsumerisme mempengaruhi pikiran wanita paska modern khususnya wanita London. Analisis ini menggunakan metode induktif yang akan menganalisis bagian-bagian khusus sebuah novel untuk menemukan sebuah pemikiran umum mengenai konsumerisme. Artikel ini menggunakan teori Genetik Strukturalisme. Teori ini digunakan untuk menganalisis struktur novel dan hubungannya dengan kehidupan sosial dimana novel ini ditulis. Analisis ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana gaya hidup wanita modern dan pandangan dunia yang tergambar dalam novel. Tujuan akhir dari penyusunan artikel ini adalah untuk mengetahui ideologi konsumerisme dalam kehidupan sosial di sekitar pengarang yang mempengaruhi pengarang dalam menulis novel ini.

**Kata Kunci:** Genetik Strukturalisme, Konsumerisme, Gaya hidup wanita, Pandangan Dunia.

## Abstract

Consumerism becomes one of popular culture in postmodern era. Nowadays, the arising of consumerism that has relation to women's lifestyle is influenced by knowledge and sophisticated technologies. Consumerism influences the women's mind to ignore the utility of each product. Aesthetic value and prestige of possessing a good is represented in the form of famous branded products. The famous brand obscured the women's judgments in consuming something. This phenomenon that arose for years is also found in Sophie Kinsella's *Mini Shopaholic*. This article is purpose to analyze how consumerism influences postmodern women's mind especially in London society. This analysis uses inductive method that started analyze the certain parts of the novel to find the general idea of consumerism. This article uses genetic structuralism theory. This theory is used to analyze the structure of the novel and to find the relation of social history when the novel was written. This analysis aims to find the women's lifestyle and worldview in the novel. Finally, this article is conducted to find the ideology of consumerism that flourishes in social life of the author. The ideology developing in social life of the author pursues the author to write the novel about consumerism.

**Keywords:** Genetic Structuralism, Consumerism, and Women's lifestyle, Worldview.

## Introduction

After publishing the 5 books of *Shopaholic* series, in 2008 Kinsella wrote the last novel of it series entitled *Mini Shopaholic* and published it in 2010. *Mini Shopaholic* is a novel that tells about middle class women and her problems such as love, family and the need. Talking about family and need, this novel concerns about consumerism emerging in postmodern women's minds. Consumerism here deals with

the strong shopping desire toward branded products because possessing and wearing the branded products give the private pleasure for the owner. It can make them possible to look down to other people who consume unbranded products. This reason pursues women to compete in buying the branded products. Buying the branded stuffs, women must work hard to get extra money to buy those expensive products because those products

pursue women's minds to consume prestige value and ignore utility of each product.

The shopping activities mentioned in the novel are also found in the real life. The women wear and dress up their family with the branded famous products before they go outside. That activity done by women is influenced by some factors such as the fever of Hollywood actor and actress that becomes trend. Besides, the private pleasure given by the branded products in the form of advertisement brainwashes women to buy a lot of branded products. Possessing branded products continually as the effect of the advertisement cause the booming of consumer society. Consumer society means a society that devotes a high proportion of its income to luxurious goods and undertakes little saving (Rutherford, 1992: 91). In the simpler words consumer society is the society thinking about consuming the luxurious goods to fulfil their desire.

In the relation to each reason explained before, we want to analyze *Mini Shopaholic* novel with its relation to society where the novel was written. Besides, we also want to investigate the lifestyle of London women at that time and the ideology of the writer. Investigating those problems, we use genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldman to find the connection between intrinsic elements of the novel and the society where the novel takes place (Goldman, 1964: 57). Finding the connection between the real history and the novel, it is necessary to analyze worldview before covering the ideology that brought by the author in the novel. Worldview is aspirations of feeling that has function as a media between the ideas of group of people and opposed with other groups (Goldmann, 1981: 111).

Conducting this research, we use structuralism analysis mixed to sociological analysis. Structuralism analysis is used to analyze the intrinsic aspects of the novel (we analyze the coherence structure of intrinsic elements in the novel) and sociological analysis to analyze the historical background of the author that has connection with the reason for what purpose Kinsella write *Mini Shopaholic*. It is true to say that all of literary works (classic or modern) contain with ideology of the writer. To cover the ideology, it is important to look for the worldview in the novel. Dealing with the reason explained before, we want to use the genetic structuralism theory to cover the worldview in this chick lit novel. The researchers also want to give the proof to the readers that genetic structuralism can be used as a tool in analyzing chick lit novel because this novel contain with worldview. In this case, the researchers also want to give the proof that genetic structuralism is an applicable theory that can be use as a tool in analyzing not only the masterpiece but also the popular literary work such as chick lit.

Lastly, we hope the result of this research will benefit the readers and those who are interested in this study of genetic structuralism analysis dealing with consumerism and women's lifestyle in early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Concerning with the problems to discuss, this research has three goals. There are: to get the description about women's lifestyle constructed in *Mini Shopaholic*, to find the worldview of postmodern women in London, and finally to know the

ideology of consumerism in London society implied in the novel.

## Research Method

This article uses qualitative research as the basis of research. Conducting this research, we use two kinds of data; primary data and secondary data. The primary data in this article are the information about women's lifestyle and consumerism taken from *Mini Shopaholic* novel. The information is in the form of statements. We also support the information from journal articles, and anything that help and support the analysis of the social condition of women's lifestyle in early 21<sup>st</sup> century in London. The secondary data are taken from internet source and books such as *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, *British Cultural Studies: an Introduction*, *Shopping and Everyday Life*, *Consumerism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain*, *Women in London Report 2009*, *Women in London Capital Women 2008*, and so on. Then, All of data taken from the novel and social condition in London are categorized to answer the problems arousing before. The supporting data are taken from bibliography of the author and the socio historical in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Analyzing consumerism in London, the writers focus on the women's lifestyle in early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Goldmann's genetic structuralism is used to analyze the relation between the significant structure, worldview, and socio historical of London society depicted in the novel. Analyzing the significance structure of the text, it is important to focus on the worldview about women's lifestyle and consumerism that are brought by the author in her novel. Covering the worldview, this analysis deals with the ideology of the writer and social condition in London society. Analyzing London society in twenty first era, this analysis concerns with women and their lifestyle. Lastly after analyzing the structure in the novel and social condition in London society especially women's shopping style, we discover the ideology of consumerism constructed in London society that pursue the author's mind to write the novel.

## Result

According to the data that have been collected and analyzed, we know that the first we can apply the genetic structuralism as a tool in analyzing this chick lit novel. All kind of novels, classic or modern, have the worldview as the ideology. Long time ago, there is statement that genetic structuralism is the grand theory that can be used to analyze the masterpiece (Goldman, 1964: 160 ). But in this article, it can be proved that genetic structuralism is applicable when it applies in chick lit novel. Why does it happen? Because all of the literary works have its own worldview as ideology. Second, the result is related to the shopping style of women in London (mention in *Mini Shopaholic* novel). Women at that time show uncontrolled shopping desire toward branded products. The sign that mentions in the

branded products pursues women's mind to possess them. For owning the branded products, women at that time must work hard because the women do not have a lot of money to spend on the expensive branded product. Besides, the women in the novel do crime to get more income to buy the branded products. Women do not pay any attention to their economic condition in their household or the economic collapse happened in London at that time. They just care about their pleasure with wearing and possessing the branded products as much as they can buy. All of actions mentioned before happen because the sign of products transform into the product it self and it replaces the use value of the products. This action happens because there is the changing perspectives between signify and signified that brainwashes the women's mind in the form of advertisement.

## Discussion

In discussing this research, the important point is to find the ideology in the novel. Investigating that reason, we try to cover the worldview of the novel and try to find the lifestyle of London women in early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Applying genetic structuralism theory, we need to find the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel because to cover the fact about the society where the novel was written and its relation to the intrinsic elements are important when we want to analyze ideology brought by the author.

The first discussion in this article is aim to investigate the postmodern lifestyle in the novel. First, analyzing the coherence literary devices in the novel is needed. Coherence literary devices mean analyzing the literary devices (plot, setting, character, ect.) as a whole part.

Mini Shopaholic tells us the negative side among consumerism that is done by London women at 21<sup>st</sup> era. The negative impact of consumerism pursuing women's mind can be shown toward their lifestyle. Women's lifestyle at that time is controlled by their private pleasure. Private pleasure pushes them to buy branded products with unbelievable prize and ignoring their economy condition. They are willing to work hard to fulfill their satisfaction. Their satisfaction becomes their most important point that must they achieve. As the effect, women do everything to achieve what they want.

As I pay for the lot, I feel a glow of self-satisfaction...

..."Darling . . . would you like a Temperley dress for your twenty-first birthday present?"

Minnie doesn't answer...

And I could borrow it for Luke's party. Just to try it out for her.

"Muffin?"...

"Dress,..."This is for *you*, Minnie! This is your birthday present!"..."

(Kinsella, 2010: 91, 293)

In quotation above, it can be shown that women can fulfill their satisfaction if they spend a lot of money. From the novel, we also know that Becky wants to buy this Temperley dress. It is difficult for her to possess this dress in normal prize because she is on her economy limit. In short, when she sees the dress on discount she wants to possess it using her daughter monthly money that given by her husband. That is why, she makes unreasonable statement in buying the dress. The proof above shows that women do anything just to fulfill their private pleasure.

The second is the worldview brought by the writer. The worldview that brought by Kinsella in her novel is the effect of classes classification system. The high class able to do anything including underestimate the lower one. The high class feels they have right to be respected in everywhere they live. In this novel the differential classes is not classified according how rich the women but it is classified based on the branded dress they wear and they possess. Women are classified into high-class women if they wear, possess and dress up their family in branded products. The branded products that they buy indicate their ability to buy those products. In fact, not all women who possess branded products buy those with normal prize because women can also possess it in special prize or a discount. Women who wear branded products fell superior. They are able to do everything. They can underestimate others who wear and dress up their family with unbranded dress and buy household in one prize shop.

Kinsella is the middle class woman who loves shopping. It can be shown from videos of her self (googlevideo.com), in those video shown that Kinsella loves shopping and she possesses a few branded shoes that are saved in her shoeseum (the museum of shoes). Among that era, the women in London are interested in possessing the branded products that has unbelievable expensive prize. The women at that time are influenced by life of the public figure. During 2008, a couple of Hollywood actress Penelope and Tom Cruise dress up their daughter, Suri Cruise, with branded products and heels shoe before they go to public (female.kompas.com). In the reflection of what happen in the real life, *Mini Shopaholic* tells about women who want to look gorgeous in front of others by using branded dress. The women also want to prove to others if they can buy the branded products and look down to others who dress up in unbranded product.

A mother in J Brand skinny jeans with an impeccably dressed daughter walk past, giving me the Mummy Once-Over, and I flinch. Since I had Minnie, I've learned that Mummy Once-Over is even more savage than

Manhattan One-Over. In the Mummy Once-Over, they don't just assess and price your clothes to the nearest penny in one sweeping glance. Oh no. They also take in your child's clothes, pram brand, nappy bag, snack choice, and whether your child is smiling, snotty, or screaming (Kinsella, 2010: 6-7).

The statement above shows that the women at that time judging something based on dresses that are worn by someone and the prize of goods consumed by someone. The women can predict the prize of products from its brand and the mother's treatment toward her child. For example someone who dresses up her daughter with Danny Kovitz dress, Rachel Riley coat, and Baby Dior shoes is judged as the great mother and glance as high-class mother.

Ideology covering in early 21<sup>st</sup> era is about the power of brand. A brand can pursue a women's mind to do anything just to fulfill their desire to possess the branded product. The action indicates that women look for its brand when they buy clothes. They are proud with the branded products that they wear because using those products women feel superior. They can underestimate and mock others who wear unbranded product. The statements show that women only want to possess the brand not the goods. Why it is happened? It is because the brand internalizes the women's minds and transform into the product itself. When women buy something, they actually do not buy the product but they buy the sign mentioned in the branded products.

"How much was it?"

"A hundred and ten." I say defensively. "Sixty percent off. It's designer, limited edition."

"So . . . you've just spent a hundred and then pounds on a cardigan which is exactly the same as the one you're wearing."

"What?" I glance down at myself in bemusement. "Of course I haven't. Its nothing like it."

"It's identical!"

"No, it isn't! How can you say that?"

There's a short pause. We're staring at each other as though to say, "Have I married a lunatic?"

"They're both pale cream." Luke ticks off on his fingers. "They both have one large button. They're both cardigans. Identical."

Is he blind? (Kinsella, 2010: 47).

The conversation show that women are just interested in the brand that stamp in the button of the dress. It means that in early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the sign value replaces the use value of each products. The prestige value in the form of sign of the branded product pursues women to buy the expensive product that has the same design and function with the cheaper one. It is true that our daily universe has saturated with images that bombarded us in the form of advertisement (Gabriel and Lang, 2010: 329). The effects of the statement before can pursue women for being not care anymore with the use value of goods that they bought; they just want to fulfill their satisfaction with buying the sign that mention in the products with unbelievable expensive prize

## Conclusion

The analysis finally comes into the resolution. In prior discussion, it presents the postmodern women life style such as consumerism. Consumerism in the novel is represented as their loves toward the branded product. Women buy branded product with incredible prize and ignoring their salary. The novel shows that women have uncontrolled shopping desire, to fulfill it they are able to work extra hard and ignore the economy condition of their states. They work hard everyday to make money, then they will spend all of their money for an expensive branded dress and wear it for two times. In consuming something, postmodern women ignore the use value of each goods. They buy something based on their private pleasure, which are coming to them in the form of the branded products. Women conceive the branded product from the advertisement in mass media and television. Since then, consumerism is manipulated by sign that comes to women's mind through the form of advertisement. Women at that time are influence by advertisements which brainwash and provoke their mind to spend their money a lot for buying a good (Featherstone, 2008: 83).

Women at that time buy something based on the brand. It shows that women at that time consume the sign attached in the products. The branded products cause the change of value toward the products. This change brings the shift of product from production into reproduction. The production of goods (shoes, dresses, ect.) becomes the reproduction of the sign that is consumed by postmodern women. It is true to say that postmodern produces the depthless culture. The statement means the actions that are done by postmodern women in side of consumerism causes the arising of new culture called postmodern culture. Postmodern culture is the culture that was born by consumer society. The born of new culture is the effect of the better balance between the society and the problem arising surround of them. The society changes the economic, politic and social situation to make the solution of the natural problems that they have (Goldmann, 1981: 40). In relation to the statement, the new shopping style is born because women want make solution of lifestyle problem that arose in early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Lastly, all of actions done by middle-class women (relating to buy and possess the branded products) in the novel indicate that they want to be regarded as high-class women. The middle class women still belong to their own social class. They cannot change their social class by wearing the branded products because middle class women and high-class women have different financial ability to possess the branded products. High-class women do not sacrifice them selves to possess many branded products with expensive prize, but middle class women do crime action just for possessing a branded product. Based on the statement before we conclude that middle class women cannot be the high-class women as long as they still sacrifice them selves to possess what they want.

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